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553 851 This celebration could also take place in the case of a married couple who have had no children for a considerable length of time, and suddenly have a girl, whom they would like to value as a boy. A man who had no children from his first wife could also celebrate the 'sobou' of his first child—a daughter, from his second wife. The 'sobou' ceremony for the succeeding boys is usually held by the comparatively well-to-do people, and one cannot fail to note the social significance of the celebrations. It is a display of one's economic ability to be able to afford killing a ram and [554] offering wheat bread and vegetables. Thus the continuing of 'sobou' ceremony for all the boys adds to one's social prestige.

851 The third stage of his introduction is the 'balila food' with other children after the end of the forty days. Though nothing outstanding happens during the meal, the implication is that the child, finishing his 'angelic period', would mix with these children later.

The fourth stage is the formal and informal visits of the mother and child to other people or the latter coming to her house with presents.

846 It has been mentioned that during the first forty days the child remains in the closest contact with its mother practically throughout the whole of its waking as well as sleeping hours as she lies beside it on the mat. During most of this period the mother nurses the child while she is facing [853] it. This close bodily proximity establishes the first educational relationship for the child. Yet this is not the sole relationship, even at this period, for 850 the importance of other people for the child's education is symbolized by the act of 'teaching' (talkeen). For this purpose 'a good man' or 'a good woman' is chosen to perform this act with the boy or the girl respectively. The chosen person eats from a sweet thing, either a date or a piece of sugar, which would then be given to the child to suck, and this is followed by prayers for the child. Through the 'talkeen' the character of the 'good man or woman' is supposed to be transmitted to the baby. When the child grows older reference to the person who 'taught' him usually crops up in assessing his character and temperament.

846 The disposal of the child's navel cord during the first forty days is of special social significance. After cutting the boy's navel cord, the father takes it to the field, there to eat some previously prepared food. After the meal, the father buries the cord in one of the divisions of the field. The income of this section is appropriated, at least theoretically, to the boy, and his 'luck' is gauged according to the yield of that area. Sometimes the boy's cord is buried below the threshold of the Kuttab (the village Koran School) as father to the wish that he would go to the Kuttab to 'memorize the Koran'. In the case of a girl, the navel cord is buried below the threshold of the house or kept in a small box. It is quite obvious that the difference in the disposal of the navel cord reflects the distinction between the prospective spheres of work for the two sexes.

854 In discussing the early training of the child during the first three years, the first important feature that looms large is the close physical proximity

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not only during the first forty days but which is also sustained till the arrival of the next baby. According to the family structure in the village, there are invariably at least two grown-up women attending to the rearing of the child, or sharing in the child's care, e.g. maternal grandmother, paternal grandmother, sisters, paternal or maternal aunts, or brothers' wives. As the newly born baby, or even any child, has no special cradle, cot, or bed, it always sleeps beside the mother or sits on her lap. After the forty days it may be picked up by relatives.

During the third and fourth month, the child is usually held horizontally with the mother's hands underneath its legs and head. During the fourth month it is held vertically, supported under the arms, and can be carried against the mother's breast, being supported with her hands under the buttocks. During the fifth month, he is normally held astride the mother's hip.

Nursing is one of the first basic needs of the child which in this community conforms to no schedule. It is guided only by two principles. The first is that the child is given the breast whenever it cries. The second is that it is suckled when the breast becomes 'compassionate', in other words when the mother's breast becomes full. It is said that when there is 'compassion' in the breast the child is hungry, and therefore the mother must offer it to her baby. The reciprocity between the baby's need and the breast is recognized to be one of the determining factors in suckling. It is true that in Silwa, as in Artas, the mother's breast is the symbol of compassion.[1] Nothing is more binding in the mother-child relationship than the memories of 'stomach enveloping' and 'breast-feeding' which are symbols invoked by mothers to remind their sons or daughters to be obedient, or to come to their help in old age. 'I enveloped you for nine months and have fed you with my breast' is supposed to be one of the most effective and compelling entreaties. In this connection Ali related the story of the Caliph Harun al Rashid and Gafar al Barmaki, his vizier, whom the former decided to kill, and imprison or disperse the rest of his family, after he feared that they were plotting to remove him from the Caliphate. Harun carried out his decisions in spite of the entreating of Gafar's mother, who had breast-fed the Caliph and who had implored him by the milk she gave him, and the locks of his hair she had cut off and kept with her. 'This is', remarked Ali, 'an example of tyranny that overrides one's duties towards his breast-feeder who is like a mother.'

It is because women can provide their babies with milk that they are considered to be endowed with compassion. This is one of the tangible arguments for the value of having girls, who would be a source of compassion not only for their children, but also for their parents.

The time and frequency of suckling varies from day to day and from child to child. A child who often cries is regarded as a weakling and hence its need for more suckling. A mother of a four-month-old child, who was

[1] H. Granqvist, *Birth and Childhood among the Arabs*, p. 107.

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who married a member of the carpenter family is usually a source of gossip and warning against such mixture. 582

In pursuing the subject of infant nursing, it is to be noted that the child does not rely entirely on mother's milk during all its nursing period, as after the fourth month it is introduced to premasticated adult food. The bits that cannot be swallowed are collected and inserted again in its mouth. Premasticated food is used more in the case of boys than girls, to help mother's milk in accelerating growth. 853

During nursing it is quite common to see a child sucking his fingers or pushing his fist into his mouth. He is actually encouraged in doing this by his mother, who sometimes puts her own finger into the child's mouth. The need is recognized more during the teething period, that is in the fourth or fifth month. For this purpose of sucking, the mother hangs a kind of loose string round the neck of the child with a bundle of hard stuff tied in a piece of cloth, and this is supposed to assist tooth-cutting. 856

When the mother starts weaning her child, she increases the amount of premasticated food given to it. She begins by weaning her child first from one breast, and later from the other. She stops milk from the breast by rubbing the nipple with a concoction of spices, ground sheep tripe, henna, cactus juice and salt stone. After 'stopping milk' the mother turns her dress back to front so that its neck and side openings hang at the back, the child thus finding no access to the breast. For the first two days of weaning, coloured hard-boiled eggs are given to the child to play with and then to eat, whenever he wishes. In psycho-analytical language, mothers in Silwa recognize weaning as a 'traumatic experience' for the child and do their best to absorb the child's attention in other directions, especially in play with other children or providing it with some delicacies of food. 862

The weaning must always be arranged in such a way that it is completed in two or three days before the beginning of the lunar month. It is believed to be very difficult to wean a child after the appearance of the new moon, and it must be left till towards the end of it. It is also believed that a woman who weans at the beginning of the month will find it difficult to bear children. This must be also observed in connection with the circumcision of girls, so that the girl will not become sterile or find it difficult to conceive. Here, one notes the striking relation between the moon and such social phenomena as weaning and circumcision. One might be led to infer that the moon must have been connected with fertility rites in some periods of Egyptian history. It is also observed by mothers that weaning of their children must not be declared immediately, but after a lapse of at least two weeks for fear of the evil eye, or 'pressure' on the mother's power to conceive. [821] [842] [304] [821]

The third basic need of the child, after the mother's bodily warmth and nursing, is the need for 'evacuation'. For the first four months (before the child can sit up) it is allowed to urinate and defaecate in a piece of cloth wrapped round its body from the waist to the knees, under its 854

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garment. This cloth can be removed, washed, or just dried, or changed. The child is often wiped with another cloth, but is not necessarily washed, if it soils itself. At the fourth month it is supported between its mother's feet, sitting to defaecate when the mother senses that it is uncomfortable or when it cries, and the cloth is put on only when it goes to bed. No fuss of any kind is made about urine, while more attention is given to faeces, yet revulsion is never shown by the mother. When the child starts to walk it is trained to say 'kaka' when it wants to defaecate, whereupon the mother lifts its garment and asks it to go to a special corner or room in the house or to go outside. After the age of three or four most parents insist that both boys and girls defaecate outside the house, or go to the special room in the house.

While the boys from now on always perform their evacuation outside, the girls are confined to the house again after they reach the age of twelve. Girls always squat for urination while boys stand, but on reaching adolescence the latter squat also. In the case of boys, the tucking up of the dress or pants and the crouching posture of evacuation tend to direct attention to the exposed genitals, while in the case of girls, after the age of six or seven at most, they, in contrast, envelop the whole process with their dress, which is never tucked up. One can see boys of all ages up to eight or nine evacuating within sight, with no sense of embarrassment. When they reach puberty they seek out-of-the-way places, facing a stone or a heap.

It is not without justification that one can make the hypothesis that the absence of disgust towards faeces and urine with regard to the infants' early training is a cultural way of conditioning the individual to bear tolerantly the odour that attends the village sanitary conditions, swamps, and handling of animal dung either as fertilizer or as fuel.

Sitting and teething are considered as important events to be watched in the child's growth. By the end of the fourth month the mother begins to train her child to sit up. The saying is that a boy of four months must be able to sit up, or he should be beaten. The girl is expected to be able to sit up a little later, at the end of the fifth month. The mother makes her son sit up on the ground with his legs outstretched, supporting his back with her hands, or puts him in a large mixing or cooking pan with tall curving sides. If the boy is not taught to sit up for himself at this age, and abandon gradually the horizontal suckling position, he would be liable to have an unpleasant breath smell when he grows up.

It is also recognized that teething is accompanied by either ophthalmia or diarrhoea. The mother's milk is sometimes used as a treatment for the sore eyes at this period.

On the first instance of the breaking of any of the milk teeth, at the age of five or six, the tooth is put into donkey dung and thrown into the 'sun's eye', asking the sun to change the donkey's tooth for a tooth of a gazelle.

Another important event in the child's life after the end of the forty

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days is the piercing of the ridge of the ears 'while they are still soft'. The girl would have three holes in each ear, two at the top and one in the lobe, while the boy would have only two holes in the right ear, one at the top and one in the lobe. A thread is inserted into each hole so that the hole is not closed during the healing period. Immediately the punctures are healed, earrings are worn. The custom is gradually dying out in the case of boys, with the exception of the first son, whereas it is still universal with all the girls. Boys are expected to discard their silver earrings by the age of eight or nine while the girls do not discard them until they are replaced before marriage by larger golden earrings.

At the end of the second year, or normally after they are weaned, both boys and girls have their first haircut (for the girls it is actually the first and last). This is accompanied, in the case of a boy, by a dish of boiled maize called 'karama', to be eaten by whoever attends, usually small boys and poor people. The boy's head is left normally with three tufts of hair, one in the middle, and one on each side, the rest being shaved off by a razor. The girl is left with a large tuft on the top of the head, while the sides are shaved all round.

The care and handling of the infant are of great significance for this enquiry. Whenever the child is on his mother's lap, or astride her hip, or sitting or crawling beside her, he is always fussed over. Mother or visitors try to win a smile from the baby by tickling or caressing him, by turning his face outwards and then inwards and so on, or in the case of a boy by playing with his genitals. On other occasions they talk to the baby or make noises to attract his attention. A very common way of playing with the child is to support him under his arms, throw him upwards and then catch him, and this is repeated while singing to the child or talking to him.

The time of changing clothes or bathing the baby occasions the greatest amount of bodily stimulation, where not only the mother but perhaps the other children pass their hands over the child's body, calling him 'O thou fish, thy body is as smooth as the fish'. Moreover the amount of kissing on the mouth or on the cheeks that the infant experiences far exceeds any conjectures from the European point of view. Mothers have no objection to visitors kissing their children; on the contrary, it is supposed to be one of the means of 'feeling at home' to kiss the young children, or a good gesture of friendship.

As to the other features of development, such as walking and talking, the writer has found no significant differences between what he has seen in Silwa, and what he knows about the general stages of children's growth elsewhere. Here there is great variety; where some children can walk at the end of the first year, others walk a few months later; while some talk during the second year, others talk only during the third year.

The teaching of the child to walk and talk is not usually a matter for adults as much as for the older children, who usually take their siblings outside when they play. The adults do not take as active a part in teaching their children as do their older brothers or sisters.

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856 their children as do their older brothers or sisters. They hardly teach or help the child in its attempts to walk; for instance, if a child trying to walk falls down, the mother is not supposed to show much anxiety for her child's discomfiture; she simply has to say: 'You will grow up and have [788] more of it', but only after spitting on the ground to ward off the effect of [195] the evil spirits. There is no baby talk, and when the child starts to babble, grown-ups usually tease him by examining his capacity to repeat difficult words, but no deliberate teaching takes place.

854 As to the sleeping posture of infants, there is hardly any stylized way, as the infant is left to sleep on his mother's lap, on another person's lap, or on the ground, without any scheduling or worry about its sleeping hours.[1] Mothers are seen carrying their sleeping infants, either vertically or horizontally, on going from one place to another. On the whole, the sleeping habits of children in Silwa are very similar to those of other peasant societies, where they learn to sleep anywhere and through anything.[1]

513 Older children and adults can be seen asleep outside the house during the day or the night in seemingly uncomfortable positions or places.

[1] Margaret Mead, 'The Primitive Child', in Murchison, *Handbook of Child Psychology*, Worcester, Mass., 1931, p. 677.

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THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS AND EVENTS OF CHILDHOOD

There is another aspect of the high mortality rate of children, which is not confined to the Silwa community, but applies to the rest of the country. Infant mortality has an obvious effect on the stability of marriage relationship, as a woman that bears children who do not survive is in danger of being divorced by her husband, for she is considered the same as one who cannot bear children at all. The larger the number of children surviving, the less likelihood there is of divorce.[1] Hence, the dire need to prevent such a disaster by women who resort to many devices for pregnancy or warding off the evil eye, some of which were described earlier. Official statistics clearly show the relation between divorce and the number of children born or surviving; the latter case is shown in the following table.

TABLE III

The relation between divorce and the number of surviving children in percentages[2]

No. of Children	*Divorces*				
	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946
None	74·7	76·0	77·0	76·8	77·8
One child	16·3	15·78	15·3	15·3	15·0
Two children	5·08	4·78	4·52	4·54	4·2
Three „	2·18	2·10	1·95	1·90	1·77
Four „	0·985	0·907	0·754	0·712	0·778
Five „	0·398	0·395	0·316	0·348	0·332
More than five children	0·318	0·222	0·245	0·186	0·205

This high mortality rate for this age group is partly due to the onset of various child diseases such as measles, whooping cough, chicken pox, diphtheria, as well as endemic diseases such as dysentery. As mentioned earlier, the sickness of children at this stage is acknowledged by the villagers themselves and sometimes attributed to acute states of jealousy from siblings, or to the exposure of the delicate child to the evil eye.[3]

On the whole, the family treatment of the infant is relatively more protective and more attentive compared with the later period of childhood. Nursing children usually fare better than their older siblings in health and appearance. The protective attitude towards nurslings and toddlers could

[1] M. Hamanain, 'Infant Mortality in Egypt', Ph.D. Thesis (unpublished), London, 1940, p. 228.

[2] Worked out from the *Pocket Census of 1948*, p. 51.

[3] According to *Vital Statistics* in Egypt, diseases responsible for infant mortality according to their death roll are infectious diseases, respiratory system diseases, diarrhoea and congenital diseases.

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855 854 be explained as a result of the cultural pressure for a large family, the achievement of which is threatened by the high death rate among children. Parents feel that they have done their duty towards the child's care immediately he is able to walk and talk, and the rest of his development is left to God's protection. Moreover, the relatively low mortality rate amongst sucklings in Silwa is due to the fact that they depend mainly upon their mother's milk, while after weaning, adult food is given to the [146] children which cannot be an adequate substitute for the mother's milk because of its unsuitability and deficiency. Yet it must be noted here that 145 children in the province of Aswan are very much undernourished compared with the normal healthy development of other more fortunate children. They are ten centimetres (about 4 inches) less in height, and five kilograms (about 12 pounds) less in weight, and the percentage of haemoglobin in their blood is only 40 per cent.[1]

857 A third important characteristic of this period of childhood is the integration of the boy or the girl with the play group and age mates. About the age of three, the child's attachment to his mother is expected to be over, [866] and this means gradually increasing its contacts with its age group outside the household, and thus the child directs itself, first to its elder siblings and relatives, and then gradually to other children in its play activities. The child may be led by hand or straddled on the shoulder by an older sister to watch other children playing, or taken to defaecate where other children do the same thing. The authority of the older sibling plays a dominant 857 593 part in shaping the child's attitudes from now onwards. The older sisters or brothers act as guardians for their younger siblings; they soothe them when they cry, protect them from interference from other boys or girls. While older boys are playing, one might hear one of them saying: 'Your brother is crying, and I'll have nothing to do with him, you are his brother and you should quieten him.' It is accepted that if the older brothers and sisters are about, other boys and girls hardly ever interfere with the younger siblings for fear of being blamed for their crying or injury. It must be pointed out here that boys are usually less burdened with the care of their younger brothers compared with girls, and this is probably one of the reasons that gives the boys freer scope for movement and rough play.

The younger boys and girls form the fringe of their older siblings' play-groups, but gradually they start to form their own groups, and imitate their elders. One finds that younger boys of five or six might be playing with their older brothers in one game, but one hardly finds boys of eight or nine in the same play group as their older brothers of the age of twelve, thirteen or fourteen. On the whole, siblings after the age of seven or eight usually prefer to go to different places for their games, and till that age, the basis of play is blood relationship and neighbourhood. A stranger boy who wants to join other children in their play is either introduced to the

[1] Ministry of Health Statistics quoted by M. Khattab, in a speech in the Upper House of Parliament, in *Al-Ahram* (Egyptian daily paper), 26 December 1950.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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159 593 I fancy that there was really no just cause for the woman's jealous suspicions. However, she has reduced her husband to a state of abject fear lest he may arouse her anger—though I did hear that on one occasion he had plucked up sufficient courage to exercise his 'rights' as a husband, and so had administered a whipping for some fault she had committed!

462 241 With regard to the division of labour among the sexes, the men certainly have the hardest and largest share, the most strenuous work in the fields being invariably done by them. The women and girls join their menfolk in the cultivation after the sun has risen, but their work is usually confined to the gathering of dry roots, tending the cattle, fetching the water for the household (Fig. 16), and so on. Of course, living is simple among the peasants, so that very strenuous work for the women is not necessary. Much, however, that might be done by them is neglected simply because they are without training in domestic duties and do not realize what important work lies to their hands.

462 515 It is, of course, very difficult for the peasants to be as clean as they should be. All the water has to be fetched by the women, often from some distance. No water is laid on in the villages, no bathrooms exist, and the houses lack the most ordinary domestic offices. Excuses must, therefore, be made for the Egyptian women, who have had none of the advantages of the poorest [179] woman in England. The instinct of the Egyptian *felläḥīn*, however, is to be clean, and the religion of Islām commands ablutions. A man will almost instinctively strip and bathe if he happens to [834] be near a canal or the river, but this privilege is denied to the women, as modesty forbids their bathing in public.

● 854 562 One of the most crying needs in Egypt is that both girls and women should have instruction in the care and upbringing of children. The children undergo a great deal of unnecessary suffering during the early years of their infancy; not because their mothers are lacking in affection, for Egyptian women are, as a rule, devoted mothers, but because they are so hopelessly ignorant.

[164] The results of such ignorance more often than not leave an indelible mark on the child, such as defective eyesight or even absolute blindness. To prevent or cure disease in their children the women 854 will go to one magician after another and purchase from them 788 amulets and written charms, not grudging for a moment the ex- 755 penditure of what may be to them considerable sums of money.

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[Text continues on page 42]

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Numbers of these prophylactics may be seen hanging from the necks of the hapless infants.

The various primitive medicinal remedies, well known to, and used by, all village matrons, are of such a nature that one wonders how any child manages to survive at all. Most of the women have a deeply rooted objection to going to a doctor for advice, supposing one to be available in the neighbourhood; and I have found it hard work to overcome this prejudice, even in the case of people who know me well and who have every confidence in me. It is encouraging to hear that the Egyptian Government has recently allocated a certain sum of money for the purpose of starting baby-welfare centres. If only these institutions can be got into good working order, and can be utilized for the purpose of training young girls in the proper care and management of children, it will be a big step in the right direction, will ensure a much stronger and healthier peasantry, and will put an end to a vast amount of unnecessary suffering. During the years I have lived among these people I have had hundreds of sick children of all ages brought to me, and it has been heartbreaking to realize, as having had no medical training I inevitably must, that I am quite incapable of dealing with the terrible diseases from which they are often suffering. As will be seen in some of the subsequent chapters, a great deal of this sickness is due to superstition—taboos against washing, for instance, being very strict.

Much good has, of course, been done by the dispensaries, which in the past were run by Englishwomen; but they are naturally limited in number, and the mothers will often defer taking their children there for advice and medicine till it is almost too late, or, at any rate, till the child has become very ill indeed. I myself had the privilege of seeing something of what was accomplished by an English lady at one of these dispensaries during the first three or four years that I resided in Egypt. I can bear witness to the splendid work she did, and I know how much she was loved and respected by the hundreds of poor women who brought their children to her for treatment. I am sure, from what I have heard of similar institutions in other parts of the country, that the same good work has been done by many others in the different provinces. The number of these dispensaries is not great enough to meet the crying need, and those that do exist have to be supported by funds from the Government, for they receive practically no support, so

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such a charm from the neck, the charm-case hanging under the right arm. I am told that a small piece of the placenta is sometimes used in this way instead of the cord, but so far I have not come across this usage myself.

Another method employed to prolong a child's life is the following. If a Muslim woman has had several children who have all died in early infancy, when another is born she asks a Coptic woman to give her *barakeh* (blessing, good luck), in order that the newly born child may live. The *barakeh* she asks for is either a part of a dress which has been worn by the Coptic woman or her husband, or else a dress which has belonged to one of their children. The dress *must* be that of a Christian, not of a Muslim. Among the Copts this custom does not exist. I asked why a Muslim should ask for the dress of a Christian, and I was told it was because they are good people.

A woman who has lost several children and wishes to ensure that the newly born infant will live acts as follows. She carries her baby in her arms, and, with a basket made of palm-leaves on her head,[1] goes from house to house begging for *ḥaseneh* (charity) for her child. She will do this however rich she may be, behaving as if she were a very poor woman. Some people may give her money, others *battaw* or *khubz* (two kinds of bread) and other articles of food. She will then distribute these gifts among the poor people of the village, even if she be as poor as they. She believes that, as the result of this action, God, or her *ḳarîneh*, will allow her to keep her child.

On many different occasions women have brought their babies to me with the request that I would spit into their mouths, in order to give them *barakeh* and make them live long! Also I found that many of my old clothes that I had thrown away were torn up, and small pieces of them given to various mothers in the village, who hung them on their babies as charms to prolong life. One expectant mother came and begged me to let her have one of my old frocks, in order that her child might be born on to it! She, poor thing, did not get her request granted, and I regret to say that her baby died very soon after birth!

Some women kill a puppy at the seventh month of their pregnancy. The puppy is killed over a cloth, on to which the blood flows. As soon as the child is born it is wrapped in this blood-

[1] The ordinary basket, called *maḳṭaf*.

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minutes after the death of the person to whom it belongs. Another explanation of falling stars is that they are darts aimed by God at unbelievers. Lane says[1] that they are believed to be darts thrown by God at evil *ginn*, usually called *'afārīt*.

Certain precautions must be taken by a woman after she has given birth to a child. A woman who has lately lost her baby must not enter the room where a woman is being confined, nor for seven days after this event. If this taboo is broken the woman who was last confined will have no milk for her baby.

If a cat gives birth to kittens which all die, and a woman gives birth to a child in the same house in which the cat had its kittens, the cat must be taken away from the house or the baby may die. Or, if it lives, the mother will have no milk.

Near a small village in Asyūṭ Province there is a stone, roughly conical in shape, standing in the fields, and surrounded by whatever crops are being cultivated on that spot. It is said that men have often tried to dig it up, excavating to a considerable depth all round it, but no one has ever been able to come to the bottom of the stone. It is believed by the peasants to be very ancient. A certain mystery is attached to it because of these beliefs, thereby doubtless enhancing its magical value. Women who have not enough milk with which to nurse their children visit this stone on a Friday. They must not speak when coming to and going away from the spot, and they should step over it, still preserving absolute silence, seven times. After this, it is believed, they will have no difficulty in suckling their infant. I was told that the stone has been visited for this purpose, among others, for a hundred years or more.

If a woman or child brings meat to a house where there is a woman who has a child under seven days old that person must not go into the mother's room, but the latter must come out of her room and step over the meat three times. If she does not do this she will have no milk.

When a woman who is a Christian, whether Copt, Protestant, or of any other denomination, has given birth to a child her relatives take some wheat flour and mix it with water. Out of this dough they make several crosses, sticking them on the walls of the room occupied by the mother and child. The greatest

[1] *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1871), vol. i, p. 283.

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number of crosses is placed in that part of the room where the child lies. It is believed that by this means no *'afārīt* can come near the child and that the mother's *ḳarīneh* cannot injure it.

Every human being is said to be born with a double, which is quite distinct from the *'afrīt*,[1] and it is called, in the case of a man, the *ḳarīn* (colleague, companion), in the case of a woman *ḳarīneh*. The man is always born with his male, as is the woman with her female, counterpart, according to the prevailing belief among most of the *felläḥīn*. The *ginn*, or *'afārīt*, are often called "our brothers and sisters beneath the earth," but they are separate beings from the *aḳrān* (plural of *ḳarīn*), though the two communities are in touch with each other.

The *aḳrān* are believed to be of different colours, some being white, some black; their looks also vary, as some are beautiful and some are ugly. This belief is easily accounted for, as each person's *ḳarīn* is a facsimile of himself or herself, and doubtless the colours are racial distinctions. The *aḳrān* are not, I believe, always malevolent, though stories of their mischief-making propensities are commoner than accounts of their good deeds.

Not only do the *aḳrān* resemble their prototypes on earth in person, but also in character—in fact, they faithfully reflect in themselves all the actions, both good and bad, of their earthly duplicates. Thus, if a man or woman gets into a temper his or her double does the same; if he or she suffers pain and sickness, so does his *ḳarīn* or her *ḳarīneh*. This point was brought out clearly one day three years ago when a large number of women had come to see me and to have their eyes doctored. One of them was speaking about her *ḳarīneh*, so I said, "But your eyes are very bad now, what about those of your *ḳarīneh*?"

"Oh," she replied, "her eyes also are bad."

"Poor thing," I said. "But who is looking after her eyes?"

"Why, your *ḳarīneh*, *gināb es-sitt* [honoured lady]," the woman immediately answered.

The following is another example of the intimate connexion between a human being and his or her double. When an argument begins between two or more men or women and a mischievous bystander wants to lead them into a real quarrel he will take two bricks and place them on their ends, each tilted against the other, or he will take off one of his shoes and place it on the

[1] See p. 237.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
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ledge this woman is of an exceedingly jealous disposition, which no doubt accounts for that particular trait being exhibited in her *ukht*! Her husband is a decent man, but I have had no opportunity of judging as to whether he is jealous or not. However, one must presume that he is so, in view of the fact that his *ukht* appears to possess this quality in so marked a degree!

As will be seen below on p. 186, some of the subterranean beings also have each an *ukht*.

FIG. 34. CHILD WEARING FROCK AND HOOD OF SACKING

A woman remains unclean for forty days after giving birth to a boy and for thirty days if the child is a girl. I have also been informed that the husband must not enter the room occupied by his wife for seven days after the birth, and that if he wishes to speak to her he must do so from a distance. I am not sure if this is always the rule, but it is so among some of the *fellāḥîn*.

A child is not washed at all until the seventh day after birth, and then the face, hands, and feet only are washed. When I endeavoured to make the women understand how unhealthy this was they declared that they were afraid to wash a child until it was seven days old, and then only to the limited extent just mentioned, for fear of its catching cold. On one occasion a child was brought to me in a most filthy state, and covered from head to foot with suppurating sores. I told the mother that I would not give her any medicine until she had washed the child. On hearing this she became terribly distressed, and declared that she could not wash it. I remained firm, however, in my refusal to give her anything until she had made the child cleaner. It transpired that the child's father had had spots on his body when he was younger,

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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and from what the woman said I fear that it was syphilis from which he was suffering. Anyhow, she told me that if the father or mother suffered in this way their children were never washed at all until they were old enough to wash themselves. Two doctor friends of mine confirmed this, stating that they knew the practice to be a common one among the peasants. As for the child which was brought to me, I am glad to say that I at last persuaded the mother to wash it to a certain extent, and I gave her some medicine. This happened a few years ago, and on my visiting the same village again some time later I was glad to hear that the child was well and flourishing.

FIG. 35. FROCK AND HOOD MADE OF SACKING

The same woman had lost several children in early infancy before this particular infant was born. The child was wearing a peculiar dress, made of sacking, and with a hood in one piece with the frock (Fig. 34). The woman informed me, and I have been told the same thing by others, that this dress was put on the child to make it live. The dress must always be made out of a sack which has contained raw cotton; no other kind will do. Two such dresses were made and given to me (see Fig. 35).

On the seventh day after the birth a midwife comes and washes the child, as stated above, and also the mother. The water used

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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for washing the child is obtained the night before and put into a metal jug with a long spout called an *ibrīḳ*. This is stood in a metal basin, and both are placed near the mother and child. The water is called *moiyet el-malāyikeh* (water of the angels), angels meaning in this connexion the *ḳarīn* of the father, the *ḳarīneh* of the mother, and the *ḳarīn* (or *ḳarīneh*) of the child. The *ibrīḳ* is decorated in different ways according to the sex of the child. On the occasion of the birth of a boy I observed that a rosary (*sibḥeh*) belonging to the father was twisted round the *ibrīḳ*, while a handkerchief belonging to the boy's sister was tied round the top of the vessel. On another occasion, when a girl was born, the mother's gold necklace and some brightly coloured silk handkerchiefs were fastened round the *ibrīḳ* (see Fig. 36). This decoration is done, so I was told, to appease the *malāyikeh*, who would then do no harm to the child or its mother. After the child has been washed a man of the same age as the father of the infant must drink the water that remains over in the *ibrīḳ*. It is believed that this will ensure the child's growing up into manhood.

FIG. 36. YOUNG MOTHER AND CHILD WITH DECORATED IBRĪḲ

On the seventh night (*i.e.*, the evening preceding the seventh day) two or three large baskets, each containing salt, beans, seed of *ḥelbeh* (fenugreek), lentils, wheat, clover, and maize, are placed in the room occupied by the mother and child. Sometimes one of the baskets may be filled with bread, this being often in the form

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

in number, sometimes of different colours, are procured, and a different name is inscribed on each. All these candles are lighted at once, and the name on the candle which burns the longest is the one eventually bestowed on the child. After it has received a name the birth is entered in the Government archives, the name of the child's mother only being given; the father's name is not entered at all.

Boys are more highly valued than girls, and special precautions have to be taken when a male child is born to protect him from the evil eye. Sometimes the midwife is bribed to keep the sex of the child a secret, and if she is paid a sufficiently large sum of money she will consent to give out to the villagers that the child is a girl. I was told of a case of a woman who had given birth to a boy not knowing the sex of the child until it was thirty days old or more, and her husband was equally ignorant.

As a further protection from the evil eye a boy is often dressed as a girl for two years or so, all the villagers, presumably, being led to think that the child is a girl.

Women are supposed to suckle their children for two years, but if a woman again conceives before the end of this period she must, of course, wean her last-born child. When this happens she hangs a 'date of jealousy' round the child's neck to prevent its being jealous of the baby when it is born. I once witnessed a most frantic display of jealousy on the part of a very young child when he saw his mother with the newly arrived infant in her arms. He flung himself upon her in a fury of envious rage. The 'dates of jealousy' in some parts of Egypt are acorns; in other parts they are made of a kind of earth moulded into the form of a date stone.

If a child cries very much the mother will sometimes purchase a very small copy of the Ḳorān and hang it round the child's neck. It is believed that if the child begins to cry and then looks at the Ḳorān which it is wearing it will immediately stop weeping. Such small editions of this sacred book are also worn by a child to keep it well and to ensure its living. When used for this purpose the book is sewn up in a cotton case.

If, after long waiting, a woman at last bears a son a festival, or *mūlid*, is held. There are various kinds of *mawālid* (plural of *mūlid*) held for different reasons and on various occasions, and among them is that held in celebration of the birth of a son. It is a kind of thanksgiving on the part of the parents, and is also

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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CHAPTER XII

THE VILLAGE MEDICINE-MAN AND MEDICINE-WOMAN

THE village magician, whether male or female, often combines the practice of medicine with that of magic; indeed, it is difficult in many cases to distinguish the one from the other, so closely are they allied. Many of the cures are magic pure and simple, and when some herbal mixture is prescribed it is, more often than not, administered by the village 'doctor' to the accompaniment of the recitation of some magic spell. Without this addition many of the peasants would consider the medicine valueless so great is their belief in the efficacy of magic!

In a village where I have often resided for two or three months at a time there lives a woman who is renowned for her goodness. All her fellow-villagers have the greatest faith in her, and sick people beg her to come to them and cure them. She sits down or stands by the sufferer, and, holding a short length of dry maize-stalk, passes it round and round his or her head, repeating prayers and passages from the Ḳorān (Fig. 121). The stalk must then be either burned in a fire or thrown into running water. It is believed that the complaint passes into the stalk and is destroyed in the fire or carried away by the water. Twice over, when I was unwell, this woman was asked by one of my village friends to pay me a visit. On both occasions she acceded to the request, and, after she had finished her performance, the stalks were burned, and my friend declared that she soon noticed a decided improvement in my condition.

It can be readily understood that in these Egyptian villages, where dust and flies abound, and where the villagers themselves are so ignorant of hygiene, eye-troubles are very common. It is appalling to see how defective is the eyesight of many people of the peasant class and the amount of eye-disease, if not actual blindness, that prevails; and all this in spite of really excellent eye-hospitals controlled by the Government. Unfortunately, the seeds of disease are sown in childhood, and even babyhood. Until the women

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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are less ignorant, and learn to realize the importance of keeping their babies clean, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the doctors to combat the many eye-diseases that cause so much suffering to hundreds of the peasants. With conditions as they are, cures for sore and inflamed eyes are much in demand and are numerous. The following are some of the remedies for eye-trouble employed by the village medicine-man or medicine-woman.

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FIG. 121. A MEDICINE-WOMAN PASSING A PIECE OF MAIZE-STALK ROUND A FEMALE PATIENT'S HEAD TO CURE HER OF ILLNESS

The medicine-woman whose methods of healing I described above has a great reputation as an eye-doctor. Those who suffer from inflamed eyes and swollen eyelids often resort to her for treatment. She takes a lump of sugar, and, turning back the inflamed eyelid, rubs it inside with the sugar. "Black blood" comes away after this operation, so I was told. She then takes a large onion, extracts the juice, and mixes with it some salt. This concoction she drops into the eyes of her patient. "It is very painful," my informant told me, but she added that it did a lot of good. While the woman is rubbing the inside of the eyelid with the lump of sugar her patients often stop up their ears with their fingers, as this is supposed to decrease the pain of the operation. For three days afterward the eye, or eyes, must be kept covered with a handkerchief, so that no air can get in. At the end of the three days the woman gives her patient a second dose of the onion

843 avoids looking at any dead person, and gazes on portraits of handsome men, perhaps magazine cuttings that she has pinned on the wall. She must be able to eat what she likes. If she is thwarted, the child will be seriously affected.

846 783 [852] Immediately after birth the baby is put in a basket, which serves as a cradle, and is not washed for seven days. The first bath has a ritual significance of purification. It is given by the midwife, and the water is poured from a pot (*abriq*) specially kept for this purpose, with different ornamentation for a girl and for a boy. The mother is technically impure for thirty or forty days after, according as the child is a girl or a boy. These Moslem customs are also found in Morocco.

844 [431] If at the moment of birth the father is working in the fields, and the child is a son, a friend will run and tell him the good news, for which he can claim a gift. This tradition recalls a text in Jeremiah: 'Cursed be the man who took the tidings to my father, saying to him "A son is born", and who filled him with joy'. (Ch. XX, v.15).

777 751 As soon as the child is born, a blue bead is hung round his neck to turn away the evil eye. For the same reason the boy of whom his parents are so proud may be dressed like a girl, till he is weaned. His mother will give him suck for two years at least, at far too frequent intervals, thus 853 causing gastric troubles. This is the length of time favoured 842 by the ancient Egyptians, by the black peoples of Africa, 586 and by Koranic precept: "Divorced mothers shall give suck to their children for two full years" (Sura II, 233). The peasant women think that by weaning late they will delay another pregnancy.

854 482 When the time comes for her to go out — and this happens very soon — she carries the infant astride her shoulder, which does not prevent her from carrying a pot full of water on her head. While she is working in the fields she puts her baby on the ground, near the path which threads the crops, in the shadow of the maize. The baby does not always have something to lie on, but rolls in the furrow, puts earth in its mouth, screams, sleeps and gets used to it all. If it cries 853 too loud, any passing mother will give it her breast.

854 857 The child stays at home until his fifth year. He soon gets used to the company of the animals there. Before long he is capable of looking after them and can take the

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890)

his having divulged the secret to me that in two days after this, the disease returned to him through imagination, just as it had left him under the same influence.

XXXII

"NECK PAIN" (WAG' AL-RAḲABA)

This means either hoarseness of the throat or diseases of the tonsils (lōzatēn). The "old wives" "cure" it in two ways. (1) They make the patient hang round his neck a huge bead of red stones, and (2) they order him to swallow a boiled hen's egg at one gulp without chewing. The harm of this latter method will appear from the story reported by the Egyptian newspapers of date 13th November, 1892, about a youth in the Daḳahlīya [Province] in whose throat the egg stuck and he died shortly after. Perhaps this will be a warning to those who are heedless and restrain them from trusting in the nonsense of the "old wives" and the absurdities of foolish individuals.

XXXIII

WORM EXTRACTORS (DAWWĀDA)

These are a community—the Ghagar and Nawar[1]—whose origin is from Syria; some say from China; and some go so far as to say that they are spread all over the world. They claim that they can "cure" children who cry too much, by extracting the worms (*dūd*) from their foreheads, pretending that this is the cause of their continual crying. Dr. Muḥammad Efendī 'Alī Duwaidār relates that a little child of his family was always crying, so the child's parents summoned

[1] [Gypsies and vagrants. See *Encyclopedia of Islam*, under, *Nūrī*. Tr.]

4: Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 (ca. 1890) MR13 Fellahin MR13

the *Dawwād* ("*worm-extractor*") to "cure" him. These are his words: Whilst I was in the dwelling, this man arrived, and I wished to witness his "operation" myself, only that, before he should direct his attention to the child, according to his wont, I directed my attention to what was in his hand before the beginning of the "operation." I found in it a quantity of cheese worms. When he felt that his trickery was exposed and that he was openly disgraced, he sought safety in flight."[1]

XXXIV

WORMS IN THE EYE (DŪD AL-'AIN)

ANOTHER crowd of quacks extract worms from the eye. Most of these worm-extractors are women to whom silly creatures come complaining of cracking of the eye and heaviness of the eyelid. They have already a confused idea that the pain they feel is due to "worms in the eye," whereas in most cases it is nothing but granular ophthalmia.[2] The "operation" is as follows: The "doctress" in spite of the patient's dislike, brings a piece of sugar and, turning back the eyelid of the poor creature, rubs the inside with it, until the fleshy part becomes rubbed away and sticks to the sugar, assuming the appearance of worms.

There is no concealing the dangers of this "operation"; one being the sticking of the eyelids to the ball of the eye. Many women have lost their sight by this ineffective treatment. Perhaps the harm and injury which overtook them may be a warning and admonition to others, so that no one will consent to the absurdities of such imposters.

We counsel people not to accept the "treatment" of the Ghagar [Gypsies] nor to pay attention to their judgments and

[1] [A photographic illustration of such a "cure" will be found in Miss Blackman, *op. cit.*, p. 212. Tr.]

[2] [Trachoma, Arabice, *ramad ḥubūbī* (sic). Dr. Sharaf gives *ḥabībī*. Tr.]

8:Schaefer A-8 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

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539^x 854

One of the songs with which the mothers quiet the little ones, and in which one often seeks in vain for the connection. This song, with a few variations, was heard by Goldziher in Cairo in 1873. (Zeitschrift der Deutschen morgenlaendischen Gesellschaft 33, p. 612.)

Ya naṭara, ṣubbīha,
ḫalli-l-wizz ye'ūm fīha.
Bint uḫti 'ar'a 'ar'a,
ḫadha-d-dīb u-rāḥ yir'a,
'ar'aša taḥt et-tir'a.

O Rain, pour it out!
Let the geese go swimming in it!
My little niece is scab-headed, scab-headed, [164]
The wolf has caught her and gone to eating,
He has gnawed her to pieces in the canal.

1. Compare No. 17, l. 2.

2. Let it rain hard enough to form puddles, in which geese can swim.

3. Owing to the filth in which the country children grow [515] up, scabby heads are not rare.